

REMARKS

Claims 9, 11-15, and 24-34 are pending herein.

I. The claim objections.

In claim 9, “lower” has been replaced by “low,” as respectfully suggested by the Examiner.

II. The rejections of claims 16-23 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph.

Applicants respectfully note that claims 16-23 have been cancelled.

III. The obviousness rejections based on Muka et al. (US 5,613,821) in view of Briner et al. (US 5,810,537) and Mastroianni (US 6,068,668).

The USPTO respectfully rejects Claims 9, 11-17 and 19-34 under U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Muka et al. in view of Briner et al. and Mastroianni. Claims 16-17 and 19-23 are cancelled herein. Claims 9, 24, 29, and 32 are independent claims.

A. The cited references do not teach or suggest a loader located in the low cleanliness room while the dust free article is being transferred, as claimed in claim 9.

Claim 9 claims in relevant part:

“wherein the loader is located in the low cleanliness room while the dust free article is being transferred;” (emphasis added)

No new matter is added by the amendments. Support for the amendments is found in present Figure 2 and pages 17-20 of the present specification. Regarding these limitations, it is respectfully not seen where the cited references teach or suggest the claimed structure quoted above.

For example, as noted on page 7 of the Office Action, the USPTO respectfully states:

“Applicant counters this by arguing that the mini-environment [of Muka] is sealed from the surrounding atmosphere and that the wafers are moved through the clean mini-environment while being transferred to the load lock. . . . [T]his is not contested.”

Additionally, it is respectfully asserted that the mini-environment of Muka is inherently clean, at least while the wafers are being transferred through the mini-environment. Therefore, Muka does not teach or suggest a loader located in a low cleanliness room while the dust free article is being transferred. Furthermore, it is respectfully asserted that the Briner and Mastroianni references do not overcome this deficiency in the primary Muka reference.

In contrast, present Figure 2 shows at least one possible embodiment of the claimed structure quoted above. Present Figure 2 shows a loader (i.e., stage 107 and driving device 108) and a wall 105, with a low cleanliness room to the left of wall 105 and a high cleanliness room to the right of wall 105. As further seen in present Figure 2, the loader remains to the left of wall 105. Thus, the loader (i.e. stage 107 and driving device 108) is located in the low cleanliness room while the dust free article is being transferred. as claimed in claim 9.

The distinction noted above is important and non-trivial because it results in significant advantages over conventional devices. For example, as explained on pages 19-20 of the present specification, because dust generating parts such as the loader are kept in the low-cleanliness room, contamination of the high-cleanliness room can be prevented.

Thus, it is respectfully asserted that the cited references, taken either alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest all the claimed limitations of claim 9. Thus, it is respectfully asserted that claim 9 is not obvious over the cited references.

B. Response to USPTO's arguments.

On page 6 of the Office Action, the USPTO respectfully alleges, "the claims do not require the low cleanliness room to be less clean than the high cleanliness room, nor do they require the high cleanliness room to be cleaner than the low cleanliness room."

However, it is respectfully asserted that one of ordinary skill in the relevant art would clearly understand that a low cleanliness room is less clean than a high cleanliness room, and that a high cleanliness room is cleaner than a low cleanliness room. Thus, it is respectfully asserted that it is not necessary to further define these terms, because they are standard American English terms that are clearly defined relative to each other.

C. Independent claims 24, 29, and 32.

Applicants respectfully note that independent claims 24 and 32 claim a unifying means in a low cleanliness room and a loader in a low cleanliness room, similar to claim 9. Additionally, independent claim 29 claims unifying the cover of the container and the door of the loader in the low cleanliness room and a loader in a low cleanliness room while an article is being transferred, similar to claim 9. As noted above, it is respectfully asserted that the cited references, taken either alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest these claimed limitations. Therefore, it is respectfully asserted that independent claims 24, 29, and 32 are allowable.

D. The dependent claims.

As noted above, it is respectfully asserted that independent claims 9, 24, and 29 are allowable, and therefore it is further respectfully asserted that dependent claims 11-15, 25-28, 30-31, and 33-34 are also allowable.

IV. The obviousness rejections based on Muka et al. (US 5,613,821) in view of Briner et al. (US 5,810,537) and Mastroianni (US 6,068,668) and further in view of Bonora et al. (US 5,895,191).

The USPTO respectfully rejects Claim 18 under U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Muka et al. in view of Briner et al. and Mastroianni, and further in view of Bonora et al. Applicants respectfully note that claim 18 has been cancelled.

V. Conclusion.

Reconsideration and allowance of all of the claims is respectfully requested.

If there are any additional charges with respect to this Amendment or otherwise, please charge them to Deposit Account No. 06-1130.

Please contact the undersigned for any reason. Applicants seek to cooperate with the Examiner including via telephone if convenient for the Examiner.

Respectfully submitted,

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